

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail
2 account comprising the steps of:
3 providing an e-mail service system for receiving and routing e-mails to the at
4 least one e-mail account;
5 maintaining for each e-mail account an exception list of authorized addressers
6 identified by at least their e-mail addresses;
7 providing a payment service system in cooperative operation with the said e-
8 mail service system for executing a required payment from a unauthorized e-mail sender to
9 assure delivery of e-mail to an intended recipient ;
10 receiving e-mail at the e-mail service system from an addresser and comparing
11 the address of the addresser of the e-mail to the maintained exception list of the intended
12 recipient's account;
13 upon finding the address of the addresser of the e-mail on the exception list,
14 forwarding the e-mail to the intended recipient;
15 upon not finding the address of the addresser of the e-mail on the exception
16 list, checking with the payment service system to see if the addresser has made at least the
17 required payment for forwarding an e-mail to the intended recipient.;
18 upon finding that the addresser has made at least the required payment for
19 forwarding an e-mail to the intended recipient, forwarding the e-mail to the intended
20 recipient; and,
21 upon not finding that the addresser has made at least the required payment for
22 forwarding an e-mail to the addressee, informing the addresser by e-mail that, without the
23 required payment, forwarding an e-mail message from an addresser who is not on the
24 addressee's exception list will not occur.

25 2. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail
26 account according to claim 1 and wherein the step of providing a payment service system in
27 cooperative operation with the said e-mail service system for executing a required payment
28 from an unauthorized e-mail sender to assure delivery of his e-mail to an intended recipient
29 includes:

30 requiring both the unauthorized addresser and the addressee to have set up an
31 account with the payment service system to complete a required payment from an
32 unauthorized addresser to the addressee.

1 3. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail
2 account according to claim 1 and including an additional step of:
3 upon receiving and forwarding a reply e-mail from the addressee of a previous
4 e-mail to the addresser of the previous e-mail, reversing the payment made by the sender of
5 the previous e-mail if the sender of the previous e-mail made the required payment to assure
6 the delivery of the previous e-mail to its addressee and the said reply e-mail is sent within a
predetermined period of time.

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2 4. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail
3 account according to claim 1 and including an additional step of:
4 upon receiving and executing a request from the addressee of an e-mail to add
5 to his exception list the address of the addresser who made at least the required payment to
6 assure the delivery of the said e-mail to its addressee, reversing the payment made by the
7 addresser if the said request from the addressee is made within a predetermined period of
time.

1 5. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail
2 account according to claim 1 and wherein the step of maintaining an exception list for each e-
3 mail account includes:
4 providing the capability to add all or some of the addresses in the account
5 holder's address book to the exception list.

1 6. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail
2 account according to claim 1 and wherein the step of maintaining an exception list for each e-
3 mail account includes:
4 providing the capability to manually add addresses to or delete addresses from
5 the exception list.

1 7. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail
2 account according to claim 1 and wherein the step of maintaining an exception list of
3 authorized addressers for each e-mail account includes:

4 providing the capability to add automatically to the exception list those to
5 whom the account holder has just sent an e-mail.

1 8. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail
2 account according to claim 1 and wherein the step of providing a payment service system in
3 cooperative operation with the said e-mail service system for executing a required payment
4 from a unauthorized e-mail sender to assure delivery of his e-mail to an intended recipient
5 includes:

6 providing at least one electronic form with at least one field of entry for the
7 account holder to set the amount of the required payment for delivery of an e-mail from an
8 unauthorized addresser to the said account holder's e-mail account.

9 9. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail
10 account according to claim 1 and wherein the step of providing a payment service system in
11 cooperative operation with the said e-mail service system for executing a required payment
12 from a unauthorized e-mail sender to assure delivery of his e-mail to an intended recipient
13 includes:

14 providing at least one electronic form with at least one field of entry for the
15 account holder's system administrator to set the amount of the required payment for delivery
16 of an e-mail from an unauthorized addresser to the said account holder's e-mail account.

17 10. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail
18 account according to claim 1 and wherein the step of providing a payment service system in
19 cooperative operation with the said e-mail service system for executing a required payment
20 from a unauthorized e-mail sender to assure delivery of his e-mail to an intended recipient
21 includes:

22 providing at least one electronic form with at least one field of entry for the
23 account holder's e-mail service provider to set the amount of the required payment for
24 delivery of an e-mail from an unauthorized addresser to the said account holder's e-mail
25 account.

26 11. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail
27 account according to claim 1 and wherein the step of providing a payment service system in
28 cooperative operation with the said e-mail service system for executing a required payment

from a unauthorized e-mail sender to assure delivery of his e-mail to an intended recipient includes:

providing at least one electronic form with at least one field of entry for the account holder's payment service provider to set the amount of the required payment for delivery of an e-mail from an unauthorized addresser to the said account holder's e-mail account.

12. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail account according to claim 1 and wherein the payment service system is designed for postage payment only rather than for general purposes.

13. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail account according to claim 12 and wherein the payment service system is embedded in the e-mail service system.

14. The method for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail account according to claim 2 and wherein setting up an account with the payment service system also automatically sets up an account with the e-mail service system or vice versus.

15. Apparatus for blocking unauthorized e-mail to at least one e-mail recipient comprising:

an e-mail service system for receiving and routing e-mails to the at least one e-mail recipient;

an exception list of authorized addresses for e-mail recipients maintained at the e-mail service system;

a payment service system for executing a required payment from a unauthorized e-mail sender to assure delivery of e-mail to an intended recipient ;

the e-mail service system including means for receiving e-mail from an addresser and comparing the address of the addresser of the e-mail to the maintained exception list including means upon finding the address of the addresser of the e-mail on the exception list, forwarding the e-mail to the recipient,

an interactive connection between the e-mail service system and the payment service system to enable the e-mail service system upon not finding the address of the addresser of the e-mail on the exception list to interact with the payment service system to see if the addresser has made at least a payment required for forwarding an e-mail to the addressee from an addresser who is not on the exception list of the addressee.;

means at the e-mail service system upon finding that the addresser has made at least the required payment for forwarding an e-mail to the addressee; and,

means at the e-mail service system upon not finding that the addresser has made at least the required payment for forwarding an e-mail to the addressee from an addresser who is not on the exception list of the addressee to informing the addresser by e-mail of the required payment for forwarding an e-mail message to the addressee.

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